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chaos to completion," involving as it does "the victory of Good over Evil, of Love over Hate, of Life over Death," its aim is to present a fuller vision of the supereminent conception and purpose of the Almighty. For poetry so exalted in spirit a less ornate format would perhaps have been more fitting; besides, the lyric tone and the choice and change of rhythm and metre often seem inappropriate or ineffective. As for the theme, it makes inevitable a comparison with the Miltonic epic which the reader must forget in order to do justice to Mrs. Watson's work. Judged by its purpose, *The Victory* is successful; it does make fuller one's vision of the divine plan of redemption—though the presentation of the plan here is somewhat fragmentary. Judged as poetry, it is well worth reading because of its general aptness of phrase, the prevailing harmonious dignity of its style, and its genuinely poetic qualities of thought, feeling, and imagination.

C. M. NEWMAN.

ALMS FOR OBLIVION. By Pegram Dargan. New Orleans: Printed for the Author by L. Graham Co., Ltd.

Fashions in verse come and go. At the present time the prevailing styles exhibited in the magazines are those set by Keats, Browning, and Emily Dickinson. One might have supposed that the once universal Byronic model had gone never to return. Yet in *Alms for Oblivion* we find a volume, nearly four hundred pages long, in which the opening poem is modeled on "Don Juan" and the succeeding satires owe their inspiration to "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." Here are the Byronic cynicism and coarseness, the personal invective and personal egotism, both in the poems and the notes appended to them. Less apparent is Byron's titanic quality of power and passion, his wit and his compelling personality.

Frankly speaking, this volume is a disappointment to a reviewer who shares many of the author's prejudices and thinks them excellently adapted to head a well-feathered satiric shaft. But Mr. Dargan's shaft is so poorly feathered as rather to suggest that proverbial Australian weapon which returns upon him who casts it. As a matter of fact, American literature is, at the

present time, in many instances the victim of ænemia and emasculation. Its promised land threatens to flow less with milk and honey than with milk and water. A Southern writer who could revive the virile realism and satire of Byron and something of that eighteenth century severity of rationalism which has in the past marked certain aspects of Southern culture, might work some splendid mischief among the many mild contemporary echoers of the larger utterance of the earlier gods of romanticism and transcendentalism. But to do this it would be necessary, among other things, to show a fair knowledge of the primary craftsmanship of a writer of verse.

Byron often wrote bad rhyme and bad rhythm, and declared he would rather err with Pope than shine with Pye, but Mr. Dargan's errors are not those that Pope, or even Byron, would ever share. Sometimes for example, his decasyllables are a foot too short; as,—

Tell him the Muse Americana ;

sometimes a foot too long; as,—

To fear—the small Columbus of his little class.

The following assonances, in the place of rhymes, occur, with many others in one poem:—spur, rear; rogue, dog; honors, owners; delves, calves; are, there; gods, woods; yet, gate; neighed, fled.

It may seem futile to note such obvious errors, but it is done with a purpose. Most of Mr. Dargan's satire is directed against the alleged unfairness of Northern critics of Southern culture and literature. The reviewer, a man of wholly Southern extraction, protests that a work with such glaring faults should be regarded as typical of the South. At the end of the volume are some five pages of errata. The *naïveté* of some of the notes is astonishing. We are told, for example, that Christofero Columbo is "the Italian for the great discoverer's name"; and "unto yourself be true" is annotated: "Polonius's advice to his son, see 'Hamlet'". The bad literary manners which allow the author to ridicule the work of writers who have recently died, like Knowles and Moody, is equally amazing. And finally the mingled obscenity and obscurity of some of the specimens

in the section called "Dixie Drolleries" suggests the sort of verse Dean Swift might have written in his dotage.

And yet, when all these disagreeable truths have been said, the fact remains that Mr. Dargan exhibits in the better part of his work considerable reading, spirit, and individuality. He sings to his critics:—

Know then, ye inksters, and such have you placed,
At once themselves and reason so disgraced,
We dare your scorn ; unto the combat come —
Behold ! a Rebel that dares beat the drum.

The inkster who writes this review cannot parse the first two lines, but he understands the other two, and wishes the Rebel all success and an improved technique in his chosen instrument. With the horns of elf-land as faintly blowing as they are at present, there is an excellent chance for drum and fife music.

L. WARDLAW MILES.

O PIONEERS! By Willa Sibert Cather. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

If the great Middle West has ceased to be a field for the novelist in tales of Indian adventure and cowboy daring, it still contains fruitful subjects for the pen of the writer with sympathy and insight who, in the westward movement of the great hordes of foreign immigrants, can discover material as romantic and as historically valuable as that recorded in Cooper's *Prairie* and Irving's *Astoria*. In this romance of the modern West by Miss Cather the author has broken new ground and reveals herself as a writer with insight into character, narrative skill, descriptive power, sense of proportion, and charm of style. In a few briefly and vividly sketched scenes revealed through the eye and heart of one that knows and loves the region, the writer makes us feel the atmosphere of the vast prairie and interprets it to us through its effect on the characters. There is no torturing of words, no forcing of the mood; all is done without conscious effort and with artistic restraint and reserve. The story deals with that medley of Scandinavian, Bohemian, German, and French immigrants who, with no experience in farming, crowded to the